



## Natural Resources and Environment

### Background

Washington is among the most beautiful states in the country, and its clean air and water provide a high quality of life for its citizens. Outdoor recreation is a key part of the Northwest lifestyle. This abundance of nature and outdoor activity is one of the main reasons people love living here and businesses look to the Northwest as an excellent place to locate.

### Solution

Senate Democrats continue to stand up for environmental protections that ensure our air and water are safe and clean. This means reducing our reliance on fossil fuels and phasing out chemical poisons that threaten our health and the environment. It means protecting Puget Sound and Hood Canal from devastating pollution. It also means making sure we use the most responsible building technologies and products in our schools and universities for the benefit of our children's health, the environment and energy efficiency.

### Session Victories

#### **Reduced car emissions – Senate Bill 5397/House Bill 1397**

More than 50 percent of the air pollution in our state can be linked to automobile emissions. This pollution can lead to respiratory illnesses, including asthma and even cancer. The Legislature adopted strict car emissions standards this year to improve public health, reduce our dependence on foreign oil and to give consumers more options when they purchase vehicles. More than 600 vehicles using new, “clean car” technology – including cars, trucks and sport utility vehicles – are available in the eight states that have adopted the “California standards” for vehicle emissions. This year, Washington became the ninth state to join this growing list. The bill passed the Legislature and is expected to be signed by the governor.

#### **Green buildings – Senate Bill 5509**

Green buildings are constructed using standards that emphasize fresh air, natural light, low toxins and clean storm water. They provide a healthier environment for students and employees, and reduce public spending through lower energy bills. This measure, which applies to all public buildings that receive state funding, promotes the use of Washington-grown lumber and the most-modern construction techniques. A broad coalition of builders, architects, school administrators and environmentalists supported the bill and Gov. Gregoire signed it into law.

**Preserving Hood Canal – House Bills 2081 and 2097**

Low-oxygen “dead zones” in Hood Canal threaten shellfish, salmon and other aquatic life. Recent research and monitoring have shown a large number of fish deaths, which threatens fishing and shellfish harvests. In response, the Legislature designated new aquatic rehabilitation zones in the areas of Hood Canal with the most serious environmental or public health concerns. The zones will help focus the work of state and local government and nonprofit organizations working to rehabilitate the area. The bills passed the Legislature and are expected to be signed by the governor.

**Ocean Policy Review Commission – Senate Bill 5278**

The federal government is coordinating an effort to review all national and state policies that affect the health of oceans. California, Oregon and Hawaii have established organizations to participate in this review of fishing, shellfish harvesting, off-shore drilling and other ocean policy and resource issues. This legislation would have designated a team from Washington to coordinate with our neighbors and the federal government. The bill passed the Senate, but did not come to a vote in the House. Funds for the commission were approved in the budget.

**Oil Spill Advisory Council – Senate Bill 5432**

The Citizens’ Oil Spill Advisory Council will review environmental safety issues to minimize the risk of oil spills, enhance oil spill prevention and ensure a rapid response. The council will monitor oil terminal and tanker operations and review the adequacy of oil spill contingency plans in our marine waters. Senate Democrats support this council because no other groups provide the oversight that a citizen committee can offer. We need an advisory council that is not dominated by regulators or oil industry officials. The council will provide input from citizens, encourage partnerships and ensure the distribution of accurate information. The bill passed the Legislature and is expected to be signed into law by the governor.

**Mercury switches in autos – Senate Bill 5710**

Mercury is known to cause a variety of health problems, especially in young children. Older automobiles contain mercury in switches and other components. Removing the mercury can be hazardous to auto scrappers. If it enters the groundwater beneath landfills, it can also contaminate community water supplies. Manufacturers of autos should commit to “product stewardship,” taking responsibility for the costs of disposing of or recycling end-of-life vehicles. This bill would have directed manufacturers to design and fund a plan to properly remove mercury-added components from scrap vehicles. The bill passed the Senate, but was not adopted by the House of Representatives.